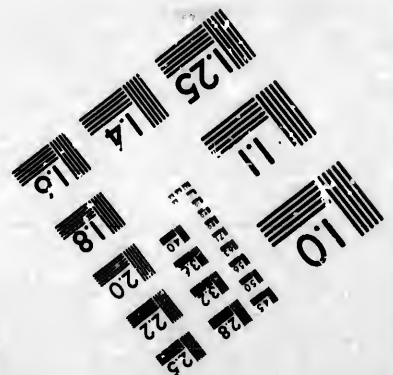
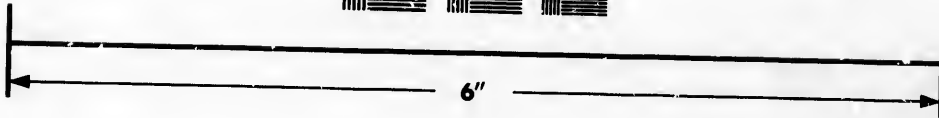
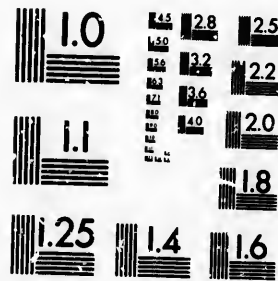


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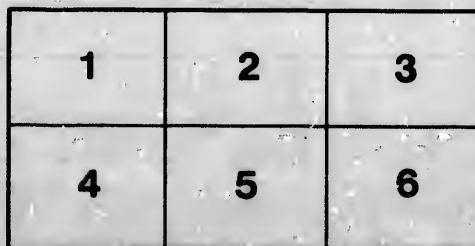
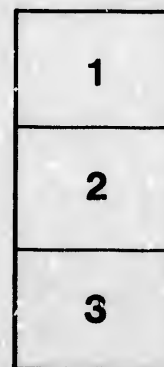
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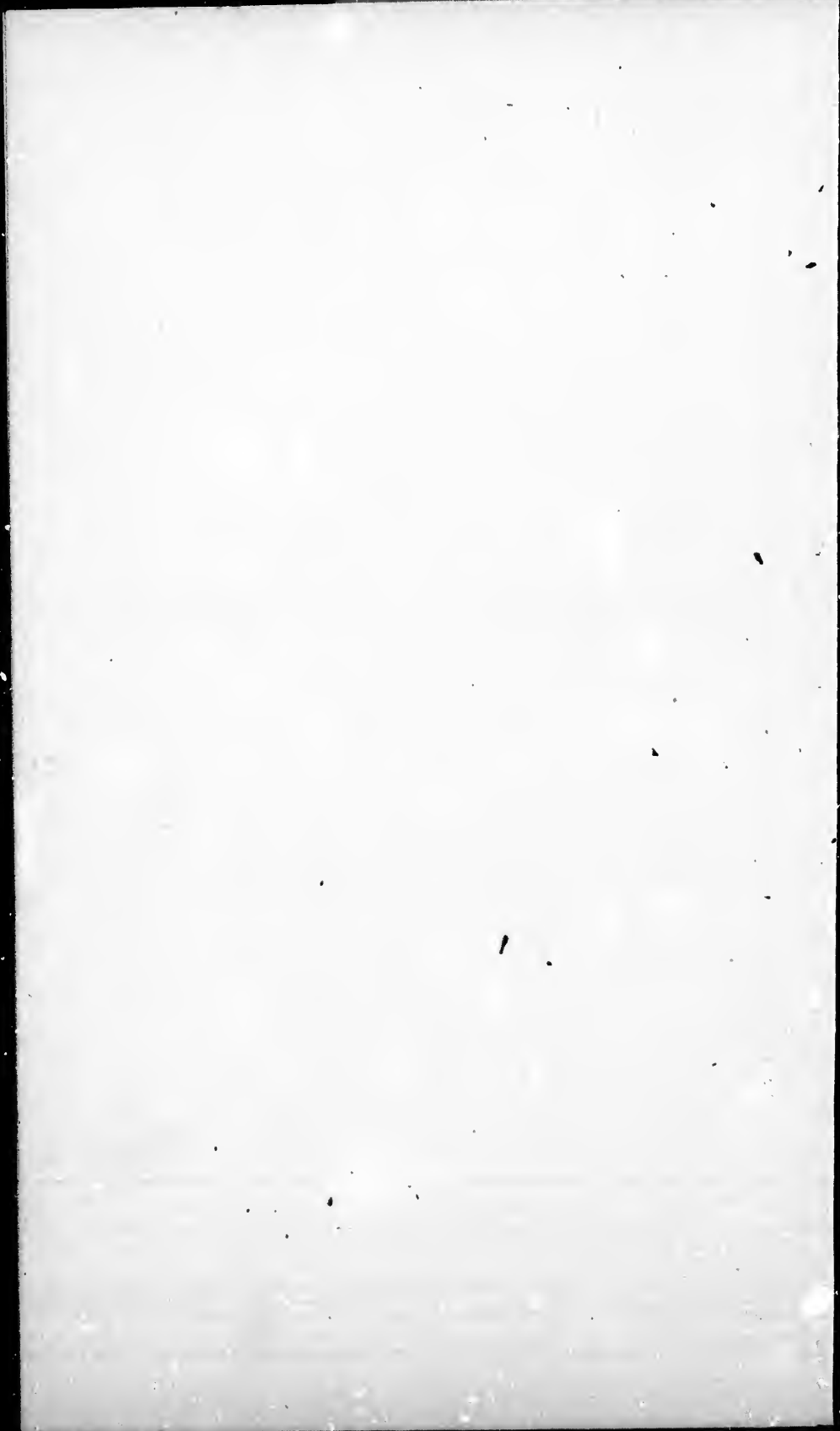
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THE
FALL OF OSWEGO,

(14TH AUGUST, 1756;)

A Chapter in British History.



PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

—
1873.

8



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1873.

BARHAM AND BEECROFT, PRINTERS, READING.

NOTE.

THIS is an Extract from a Family History in M.S., wherein an account is given of LIEUT. COLONEL JAMES FRANCIS MERCER, of Pepperell's (the 51st) Regiment, which Corps formed part of the Oswego Garrison under his command at the date of the occurrence narrated.

The particulars are gathered from such Public Papers of the day as I have been able to gain access to, and from private letters and documents hitherto unprinted.

The full sketch of Col. Mercer enters of course into his private life and character, which justify the regard in which his memory is held by his relatives ; but such details do not immediately concern the historic event here treated ; it is sufficient to say that he was of one of the oldest Scottish families. His rise in the army, and that solely through merit, was considered rapid ; at the time of his death he was about 48 years of age.

My best thanks are due to the Proprietors of the *Reading Mercury* for their courtesy in permitting me to inspect the files of their venerable and valuable journal, as from its old records has been collected much of the interesting information here presented.

W. T. M.

SHINFIELD GROVE, BERKS,

April, 1873.

THE FALL OF OSWEGO.

IN October, 1754, COLONEL MERCER, who had received his Lieutenant Colonel's commission in the end of the preceding month, and been appointed to the 51st or Pepperell's Regiment, returned to London from a tour in France, and found an order from the Secretary of State to hold himself in readiness to set out for America. His first start was disastrous, for he was shipwrecked, and the account of the accident he gives in a letter to his brother William at Perth, written 12th October, 1754, on his again reaching London. "In case you should hear of it by some other means, I must tell you that last Wednesday morning you had almost been a brother out of pocket. The Packet I was on board of from Dieppe was lost on the coast of Sussex; we struck a little after three in the morning, almost half-an-hour before high water. The sea run mountains high over us for almost two hours, every wave threatening destruction, the wind very high, and the sailors, through fear, uncapable of every thing. I believe my presence of mind in flying to secure the Companion and the Cabin windows to prevent the Vessel's filling with water, was the means of preserving our lives. When day broke about six in the morning, and we found the force of the billows abate by the Ebb of the Tide, we ventured to open the Companion, and to our great comfort found ourselves on the beach, instead of a bank in the sea; and in half-an-hour walked on shore. By the package of my trunks and their being uppermost in the hold I even saved my clothes, which I conveyed very fast beyond high water mark, and am but a small sufferer. Represent this to the Women so as not to fright them, or make them anxious, for *cras iterabimus ingens equor.*"

On the 5th November, he writes "just setting out for Portsmouth," and from that place on the 9th as he was embarking.

All his letters at this time are written in a fine tone and manly spirit, but a certain fore-boding seems traceable throughout them. He sailed in the Gibraltar, a 20 gun man-of-war, and after a stormy voyage of 56 days he landed in Virginia; his first letter thence being dated from York, Virginia, 10th January, and his next from Boston, New England, 18th February, 1755. In June he was at New York, and took a favourable view of our affairs on that continent, a view somewhat altered when he wrote in the following month from Camp, near Schenectady in Nova Scotia, for he reports the enemy "numerous and vigilant and not to be "bullied," while "the dissensions and animosities of different "factions, all swayed by interest, and the different views of each "Province, betwixt which there subsists great jealousies, are ad- "vantages to the enemy and obstructions to the public cause." "You must know" he adds "the Constitution here; all British "America is a Democracy."

On this head he remarks to his friend Mr. Grahame, in London, (9th June, 1755). "Nothing will satisfy the Americans while "there's a Frenchman on this Continent, but their Mother Country "being at the expense of chasing them off it."

Colonel Mercer at this time had charge of the rear of the Troops under Major-General Shirley, who was pushing on up the Mohawk River to Niagara, by route of Oneida and Oswego. From Oneida the Colonel wrote very hopefully, and admitting some losses added "our bad success on this Continent does not dis- "spirit me; if our Colonies are properly connected, and their "strength judiciously directed we are still able to chase our Enemies "from America." On the 10th September, after reaching Oswego, he wrote a brief description of the place: "A small fort on a "point of land betwixt such a river as the Tay, running north- "ward on the East, and the Lake on the North; our Sailors say "the Lake is above 200 miles long and 80 or 90 broad. Ever "since I have been here the north west wind has prevailed, and "raised a great swelling wave which breaks like thunder on the "rocky shore; these winds are very cold even now, and must be "extremely so in Winter. If they will give us leave we shall set "out in a few days a Laurel gathering."

The laurels were undoubtedly to come, but he was not to move

from Oswego to seek them, and when they came the cypress was interweaved with them. In the following month, October, he writes: "I am destined for the Command here this Winter. * * * Our campaign in this corner has proved unactive; "the navigation of these immense lakes is impracticable with the "Batteaus we use, and the long way we have to bring our provisions, the want of roads, the scarcity of carriages and horses, "is the cause we could not proceed. Let me assure you it's no "easie matter to carry on a successfull war over 200 miles beyond "every necessary of life. The Spring will, I hope, produce a new "and more usefull kind of Boats, and the Experience we have "acquired this year may befriend us the next. However his "Majesty's arms have not been intirely unsuccessfull on this "Continent; besides our conquests in Nova Scotia the French "have had a considerable loss in this province. Major General "Johnson was attacked by 2000 of them, of whom he slew the "Major-General, the General of their Indians, many other officers "and one half of their men; the General and Commander-in-Chief is now Prisoner at Albany. We are literally fighting for "the Bear's Skin; it's my opinion who wins it, will buy it. This "letter was begun a fortnight ago; since, our General has left us, "and I am now Commanding Officer. If I have the happiness "of preserving the fort, and giving content to the Gentlemen "under my Command I shall think it the best spent Winter of my "life."

Here we have a plain fore-shadowing of two things, an attack by the Enemy, and dissensions in the force, but not a word of the treatment that he and his men received (as will be more fully shown hereafter) at the hands of the Superior Officer, who had now literally abandoned them to their fate. A contradictory comment was this step of General Shirley on the last words of the Duke of Cumberland to Colonel Mercer, as recorded in a letter to William Mercer about this time (20th December, 1755), from his friend and agent Mr. Grahame: "Go, be diligent," said the Duke, "I wish you success, and no Injustice shall be done "you."

The state of isolation in which he now remained is expressed in a letter on family affairs (of 24th January, 1756): "I have

“ nothing to write you from this place ; our Communications with
“ the rest of the World have been cutt off for dis three months.”

Later still he was hopeful ; on 14 March, 1756, he says : “ I
“ have nothing to write you from this corner, but of myself ; know
“ then that I am in very good health and extremely happy, tho’ I
“ have pass’d this winter at the back of God’s elbow. I am now
“ by various causes the Second in Command on this Continent and
“ not entirely without some hopes of another Testimony of his
“ Majesty’s favor.”

To preserve accuracy of date it should be noted that in the
previous month he had in expectation of an immediate attack
written to Mr. Grahame a hurried but characteristic letter, which
(minus the P.S. referring only to the conveyance of mails) I think
it right to give entire :

“ Dr Sir,

“ I have just time to acquaint you of my being
“ well, and desire the favor you will communicate this news to my
“ Brother; we are threatened here by the Enemy who the Indians
“ report are making great preparations to attack us: I am busie
“ putting the Place in a posture of defence: if I have the good
“ fortune by a gallant resistance to preserve it, I know it will add
“ to the great affection you ever bore me, if I’m overpower’d by a
“ superior force I am sure of your compassion, & if I betray my
“ trust despise me, which wou’d be the greatest mortification cou’d
“ befall your Affectionate friend and

“ Obliged

“ Humble Servant,

“ JAMES F. MERCER.

“ Oswego, February 24th, 1756.”

In his last letter extant (8th July, 1756) he occupies himself
solely with his favourite theme, the education of his nephews and
nieces, merely remarking : “ I have nothing new or entertaining to
“ write you from this forrest ; if anything has happened in America
“ worth your attention it has not reach’d us. We have heard
“ nothing of Lord Loudon, nor any British fleet on these Seas.
“ So much for Public News.”

The next letters on the family file are concerned with his death

and its results : to these we shall proceed by and bye, and give now what we know of the assault and capture of Oswego, the loss of which was the instant result of the Commandant's untimely fall.

As we see, there is nothing under the Colonel's hand to shew how the time was passed during July and the early August, but on the 12th August the enemy appeared and attacked the less important post of Ontario, took it on the 13th, and at day-break on the 14th opened fire on Oswego. An hour or two after, between 8 and 9 a.m. a cannon ball, first killing a drummer by his side, struck Colonel Mercer in the body, carrying away his front, and killing him instantaneously. About nine the Garrison quitted the fort and took to the ditch, and at ten a Council of War was held by Colonel Littlehales who was now in Command, and Oswego was surrendered.

I shall pass on presently to the manner in which the disastrous news was received at home, so far as I can collect information from the Public Papers of the day, and I shall give extracts from family letters shewing how Colonel Mercer was privately lamented ; but I propose first to place more in detail the particulars of the transaction as I find them recorded ; and first comes the one version ordinarily received from Smollett's History of England. It is meagre and evidently not based on perfect information. I omit the part where the writer gives an account of the cruelties practised by the Indians on the prisoners of war, because I see nothing in the private letters before me to bear this out, and the way in which, as I shall hereafter shew, the French victors honoured Colonel Mercer's grave, seems to militate against this view.

This narrative ends with calling the affair a proof of "egregious folly, temerity, and misconduct," but does not say on whom the historian lays the blame, though from the way in which he mentions Colonel Mercer it is clear he imputes no fault to him, as indeed no fault is ascribed to him in any document public or private to which I have had access. This is then what may be called the historian's account, as taken from Smollett's Continuation of Hume's History of England, Book iii., cap. v., sect. 34.

"The loss of the two small forts called Ontario and Oswego was a considerable national misfortune. They were erected on the south side of the Great Lake Ontario, standing on the opposite

sides at the mouth of the Onondago River that discharges itself into the lake, and constitutes a post of great importance, where vessels had been built to cruise upon the lake, which is a kind of inland sea, and interrupt the commerce as well as the motions and designs of the enemy. The Garrison, as we have already observed, consisted of fourteen hundred men, chiefly militia and new-raised recruits, *under the Command of Lieutenant-Colonel Mercer, an officer of Courage and Experience*; but the situation of the forts was very ill-chosen; the materials mostly timber and logs of wood; the defences wretchedly contrived and unfinished; and in a word the place altogether untenable against any regular approach. Such were the forts which the enemy wisely resolved to reduce. Being under no apprehension for Crown Point they assembled a body of troops, consisting of thirteen hundred regulars, seventeen hundred Canadians, and a considerable number of Indian Auxiliaries, under the command of the Marquis de Montcalm, a vigilant and enterprising officer, to whom the conduct of the siege was intrusted by the Marquis de Vandreuil, Governor and Lieutenant-General of New France.

“The first step taken by Montcalm was to block up Oswego by water with two large armed vessels, and post a strong body of Canadians on the road between Albany and the forts, to cut off all communication of succour and intelligence. In the mean time, he embarked his artillery and stores upon the lake, and landed them in the bay of Nixouri, the place of general rendezvous. At another creek within half-a-league of Oswego, he erected a battery for the protection of his vessels, and on the 12th day of August, at midnight, after his dispositions had been made, he opened the trenches before Ontario. The Garrison, having fired away all their shells and ammunition, spiked all the cannons, and deserting the fort, retired next day across the river into Oswego, which was even more exposed than the other, especially when the enemy had taken possession of Ontario, from whence they immediately began to fire without intermission. Colonel Mercer, being on the 13th killed by a cannon-ball, the fort destitute of all cover, the officers divided in opinion, and the garrison in confusion, they next day demanded a capitulation, and surrendered prisoners of war on condition that they should be

exempted from plunder, conducted to Montreal, and treated with humanity. These conditions, however, the Marquis did not punctually observe."

Much fuller, more accurate, and evidently more trustworthy is the following narrative, found among our family papers. It is in the handwriting of Mr. Grahame, who bitterly mourned the death of his friend, and he seems to have taken much pains to get at the facts, the more so, that General Shirley, who was the real culprit, was then arrived at home, and under a cloud; but being a man of strong influence, Colonel Mercer's friends were evidently under some anxiety lest in endeavouring to shift the blame from his own shoulders the General should seek to disparage the memory of the man he had wronged.

I should say then that Grahame's information was chiefly derived from Captains Johnston and Haldane (Aberruthven), and the Colonel's servant, James Robertson, all of whom were present at the siege and eye-witnesses of its occurrences.

The narrative is undated and runs thus:

"In giving this account of the affair of Oswego, which of all the American affairs I have taken most pains to be rightly informed about, I must begin with the time General Shirley left that place, which was in October, 1755. Colonel Mercer was left Commanding Officer with about 700 men of both regiments, to wit, Shirley's and Pepperell's, and as it was said 61 days' provision for that number, but upon a strict scrutiny there was not a sufficient provision for above half that time, at half a pound of pork, and half a pound of flower, half a gill of rum per diem per man. I must also acquaint you that when General Shirley left the place he left not the least orders or directions with Colonel Mercer how he was to act, either in regard to the provisions, or in carrying on the works. Nay, so much was he kept in the dark, and so much did they endeavour to distress him, that it was but a few days before the General went that he was given to understand that he was to remain there: even the Indian presents which were kept there on purpose to procure intelligence, etc., they had determined not to deliver to Colonel Mercer, but that was prevented by certain persons hearing their intentions, and consequently frustrated.

"Even sixty-one days' provision for such a number of men as

Mr. Shirley left, was but a small quantity for a garrison removed at least 250 miles from where they could have any supply, a Water Carriage at all times tedious and difficult, but in Winter impracticable as the rivers and lakes are froze up. And as it happened in one of the expeditions, hereafter to be mentioned, the Battoes were a fortnight on an island in one lake, but dragg'd over the Ice into open water by the Battoe-men, &c.

"However, Mr. Shirley promised at his departure to send immediate Supplys of Provisions upon his arrivall at Shenectady. But how much was the Garrison's dissapointment when they found only 12 Battoe loads arrive, the largest of which can carry only 8 Barrells at most.

"The season was now far advanced, and it might have been of bad consequence to have waited in hopes of further Supplys, when Colonel Mercer called a Councill of War, in which it was resolved to detach an Officer with about 40 Battoes to the Great Carrying place for a supply of Provisions. Ensign Skyler was the officer; he returned about the 25th Nov., but even this supply could not have held out to the end of January or beginning of Feb., and the Garrison must have been obliged to Evacuate the forts or Starve. Wherefore as the Winter was surprizingly open, Colonel Mercer determined to make another attempt in order to get a further supply, when Lt. Haldane was detached, the 30th Nov., to the Great Carrying place and Happily returned in 14 days time with about 40 Battoes loaded with Provisions. Such shifts was the Col. put to, and before this had been obliged to give furlows to numbers of the men to return home in order to lengthen out the Provisions as much as possible.

"By the plans of the Forts sent home by General Shirley they appear to have been compleat and of Considerable Strength. I shall only say what they really were. Fort George or the old Fort was originally intended for an Indian trading house, with a slight Stone wall round it, so crazy that it was ready almost to fall of it self; it's true Capt. Bradstreet upon his arrivall there with 3 Companys in May, 1755, being apprehensive that a Body of French and Indians intended to attack him, had throwen up in a Hurry a few Parrapets of earth, to render the place more defensible against a sudden attack from small arms. Fort Ontario

on the East side of the River, about 600 yards distance from the Old Fort was nothing more than a small Stockaded or Picketted fort, a defence only against small arms, and at the time Mr. Shirley left Oswego the Stockadoes were not all put up—not a Platform for small arms—no ditch began, nor a Barrack for the troops, nor one single Gun mounted. Fort Oswego, another small fort, which was intended to have been built upon a rising ground about 400 yards to the Westward of the Old fort was but just begun, and so much were the men fatigued and Harased out, having not the smallest Bedding, lying on boards, cover'd with a single Blanket, tho' Bedding &c. was promised by the Generall to be sent up—and at the same time on short allowance of Provisions and no Pay—for none they had from the time the Gen'rall left them to the day of Surrender—that Colonel Mercer found it impracticable to proceed with that work and was obliged to put slight Picketts, just sufficient from [*sic*] preventing the Indians from suddenly rushing in upon the troops posted there. Indeed to erect Barracks for the men was Sufficient employment for most part of the time, as some did not strik their tents till the middle of Dec^r., and the Barracks they then got into not so Sufficient as to keep out the Snow and Rain when the wind was high, so that the Men were often cover'd with Snow in a morning when they awaked.

“About the 20th of January Colonel Mercer had intelligence that a considerable Body of Indians and some French Regulars from Niagara and Cadrahua intended to attack them ; the Garrison was then reduced to so low an Ebb that General Shirley's Reg. had not above 30 men fitt to do Duty, and Sir William Pepperall's only 50 ; yet with these few men he set about puting things in as good a posture of defence as possible ; he mounted Eight Six-pouanders in Fort Ontario, erected Galleries for small arms and in short did everything the Situation he was in could admitt of—for no man that could crawl out of his Barrack was spared working, and the ordinary Duty of Garrison was often performed by men on Crutches.

“On the other side of the River he removed the few troops that were in Oswego Fort to the Old fort, raised a fascine Battery on the south side fronting the Gate, repaired as well as possible the

Parrapetts which Mr. Bradstreet had thrown up, and put everything in the best Posture of defence he could.

“ However the Enemy did not come at that time and he saw nothing of them except a few small scalping parties that would seize and kill some few Stragglers that contrary to repeated Orders would go out of the forts ; but even this harrassed and Weakened the Garrison much as they were Oblidged daily to sent out parties for firewood, &c., and upon these occasions as they could not afford to send strong Covering Parties they lost frequently men.

“ During the Winter Shirley's Reg. lost about 200 men and Pepperell's 70, occasioned by Scurvys, and other distempers occasioned chiefly by the severity of their living and badness of their Barracks.

“ Colonel Mercer from time to time sent repeated advices to Shirley, of the Intelligence he had received of the Enemy's intentions, of the weak state of the Garrison, of the Scarcity of Provisions, &c.—to which I am certain he never received one satisfactory Answer to any one point from Mr. Shirley ; the only Instructions he received from the Generall was to proceed with the outmost Expedition in felling timbers for building 3 more vessels on the lake Ontzorio, which orders the Colonel too literally comply'd with, considering his situation.

“ About the latter end of March a small supply of Provisions arrived and a Number of Ship Carpenters soon after, who had orders to do nothing but upon the shiping, and the Colonel was forbid to employ them any other ways. He was made to believe at same time that Captain Bradstreet would follow soon after with a large supply of Provisions, a strong reinforcement of troops, a detachment of the train and two Engeniers ; but it was the middle of May before he came. He brought with him a large quantity of Pork, great part of which was spoilt, and some flower, also in bad condition—about 250 or 300 recruits belonging to both Regiments with two officers and Sixteen of the train. As I said before Colonel Mercer had orders to employ these men in expediting the vessells, tho' at the same time they forgot either Sails or Cannon. Not a word of proceeding with the Works—nay so much to the Contrary that a few days after the Engeniers

arrived Mr. Shirley's Secretary wrote to the Commissary of Stores who paid the Works, not to issue any money on that account.

"It will not be surprizing to hear that in this Situation of affairs the men were uneasy—were approaching Muttiny for want of Money—Cloaths—for they had none from the first Cloathing—and Provisions nothing but Salt Provisions and Water, Rum being even scarce in the Garrison amongst the traders had they had money. All the bad consequences that might have followed such circumstances were prevented by the prudence of the Colonel and the other Officers who held a Council on the Intelligence of their being Attackt, wherein it was resolved that every Captain should take out his Company and pledge his own faith to the men for all Arrears—representing at same time that divisions in a Garrison when attackt must hurt every individuall. The men like true Brittons huzza'd, and in the end each did his Duty.

"About 10 Days before the Enemy appeared, Colonel Mercer had intelligence that 30 or 40 Battoes with a considerable number of French and Indians were landed 14 miles to the Eastward of fort Ontario: three of our Vessells were then a-cruizing on the Lake with a detachment of troops on board. Colonel Mercer sent to desire they would stand to the Eastward to make a more certain discovery of the Enemy, and if possible to annoy them. Had this been comply'd with the fate of Oswego might possibly [have] been retarded, if not prevented; but they returned into the harbour next day.

"The Colonel immediately proceeded to Cut a Ditch round fort Ontario and to open Ambrasures on the Parrapetts to the Westward of the Old Fort, and in doing everything the Engeniers thought practicable to put the place in the best posture of defence, when on the 10th of August a few of the Enemy's Indians appeared under Ontario fort, and Scalpt a man of Pepperell's Regt.

"On the 11th—in the morning—a small Schooner was ordered to take a view of the Coast to the Eastward of the Garrison, who very soon returned and fired a Gun, the Signall appointed for the discovery of the Enemy; on this an officer was sent out to reconoitre the encampment who on his return reported to be sufficient for 1500 men, but believed their whole force to be about

4000 or 5000 men, as the Canadians and Indians generally conceal themselves in the Woods. This account was afterwards thought pretty Exact.

"Two Sloops carrying four and Six-pounders were immediatly ordered to annoy the Encampment, but were soon obliged to bear away as they were briskly saluted by a Battery of 12 and 18-pounders, part of the Cannon the French took from Generall Braddock—and many of the Shot took place, for they brought into the harbor two 18 pound shot. This afternoon the Canadians and Indians began a smart fire from their small arms on fort Ontario from behind Loggs and Stumps; this night the Enemy open'd their Trenches and began their Parralell, to the North East of the fort 300 Yards under cover of a rising ground.

"On the 12th at day Break a great number of Battoes were discovered to the amount of about 150 or 160 coming round the 4 Mile Point from the Eastward, the fire from the Musquetry grew warmer and continued so till Night.

"On the 13th the same fire was renewed again on the South and East side of the fort, which was returned as smartly from the fort, and not without some success. They could plainly discover the Enemy at work—their Cannon bringing up—and a Battery raised to a convenient hight with fascines ready to open—and all this without a possibility of disturbing them except by a few Ricochett Shot which had not the desired effect, as they were obliged to give too great an Elevation for so small a distance.

"As the Situation of the ground would not allow of any defence from the Garrison Colonel Mercer, by advice of the Officers and Engeniers, gave orders for evacuating this fort, as it could not hold out an hour after their Battery was opened—which orders were executed in good order 3 o'clock this afternoon without the loss of a man. This night the Enemy took possession of that fort and began a Battery before it, which they had in forwardness for Eight piece of Cannon by Day-break the 14th.

"When we fired the morning gun they returned the fire from their Battery and the Cannonading continued hot for some hours. About 8 o'Clock we discovered the Enemy fording the River about a mile above; Colonel Mercer ordered a party to oppose them,

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but before his orders could be executed he, poor man, was killed by a Cannon shot.

"About 9 o'Clock the Garrison quited the Works and went into the Ditch—except the officers and mer that were employ'd at the Guns—as they were exposed to the Enemy's fire in flank and rear without any Cover, as in order to make the Guns bear against the Enemy they were oblidge'd to be reversed—that side the attack was one [on?] being left unfortified as depen[d]ing on the shiping.

"About 10 o'Clock the Garrison discovered the Enemy had passed over all their Irregulars, and were filing off to Surround them, and the Marquise [*sic*] de Mont Calm in readiness to pass over the regulars in order to give a Generall Assault.

"Colonel Littlehales, on whom the Command devolved, then called a Council of War and demanded of the Engeniers their opinions; they declared the place not tenable either against Cannon or a Generall Assault, of which the Council thought it advisable to beat the Chammade, and an officer was sent with a flag of truce and a Capitulation agreed. The terms were that the Garrison should surrender Prisoners of War, the Officers and Men have their Baggage secured, to be protected from any Insults of the Indians, and that they should remain prisoners of war till exchanged."

The above statement, carefully compiled, may be taken to give the true version of what the historian already quoted calls a "National Misfortune."

By reason of the slow conveyance of intelligence in those days, it was between six and seven weeks before the news of Oswego's fall reached England. The first notice I can find is from the London Papers of 30th September, 1756, (reproduced in the Reading Mercury of 4th October), "We are sorry to hear that, by letters received this day from America, there is advice that the French have taken Oswego with a quantity of Artillery, &c."

A paragraph headed "Plantation News; Albany, August 19th," from which the coming attack might have been expected, seems to have been delayed in transit, as it was not published till after the news of the Capture had already been made known as above. It states that "about 3 o'clock this morning came to town (*i.e.* Albany)

“ Sir William Johnson, Bart., with two Indians, by whom we have “advice that a large army of French and Indians were arrived at “Oswego in order to lay siege to that place,” and it is added that the French newswriters say that the conquest of Oswego would secure to them the quiet possession of Pennsylvania, and give them a free entrance into the Province of New York. Hence we may infer the great importance of the undertaking.

On the 14th October the London papers report “a fresh account of Oswego’s being taken,”—and later in the month the following (not very correct, as will be seen) particulars were given to the Home Public.

“Plantation News—Boston, 3rd Sept.—We have been continually and almost daily alarmed since the 26th of last month “with Advices relating to the taking the forts at Oswego, with the “Garrison, Arm’d Vessels, Provisions, Artillery and Warlike “Stores by the French. The first Advices were brought from “Oswego to Albany in such a manner, and were attended with “such Circumstances as very much lessn’d the Credit of the “Account ; but the Melancholy News is now too fully Confirmed ; “though even to this day it is impossible to come at the Particu- “lar Circumstances of this Unhappy Affair. Some make the “Number of the French to be 4000 Regular troops, and 3500 “Canadians and Indians ; and others say not half the Number. “Some say that Fort Ontario, which was mounted with 8 Cannon, “after Two Days’ firing against it with Small Arms only, without “one single Cannon being brought up, was quitted by our Troops “posted there ; and that the French took possession of that Post, “and from thence fired upon the old Fort on the other side of “the River, which soon surrendered. Others say that the soldiers “themselves let the French into the Fort. And this day we have “an account from Albany (but how they had it there from Oswego “we cannot tell) that the French had burnt the Forts and put “almost the whole Garrison to the Sword. We have not heard “of any Articles of Capitulation ; nor can we tell what is become “of any Part of the Garrison that may have survived. It was “very unfortunate that Col. Webb with the 44th Regiment and “1000 Battoe men, who were destined for the strengthening “Oswego, and were upon their way thither, were not arriv’d there

“at the time when the French attack'd the Place, which they
“might undoubtedly have been had they not had the Misfortune
“of being detain'd a Considerable time at Shenectady for want
“of sufficient Provisions for their Passage being sent thither in
“season. Had such a considerable Reinforcement got thither
“it is more than probable that Oswego would have been safe in
“our hands at this day. And what added to the misfortune of
“the Battoes being detained, was that they had on board Cannon
“for the new Vessels built at the Lake this year.”

The next in order range evidently wide of the mark :

“London, Oct. 28th.—There are Letters from New York im-
“porting that Col. Webb, who was sent with a large detachment
“to reinforce the Garrison at Oswego, on his arrival there found
“the Fort blown up and about 500 dead Bodies scattered in and
“about the Place ; but the Particulars of this melancholy Affair
“are not yet known.”

“London, Nov. 2nd.—The Mermaid has brought letters from
“Boston of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of September, which contain
“an account of the shocking Circumstances that have attended
“the loss of Oswego. The Enemy carried their Barbarity to such
“a Pitch that, after they had mastered the Garrison by the
“Treachery of some in the Place who let them in, they massacred
“the People, sparing no Age or Sex, Cutting off Heads and
“setting them upon Poles round about the Place, ripping up
“Bodies and tearing out the entrails, which they burnt, and by
“this means (so careless were they in their Rage and Fury) the
“Place was set on Fire and entirely consumed. It is reckoned
“that about 1000 of our people fell in this cruel manner ; and
“thus has that important Place been lost for want of *timely Relief*,
“through that indolent dilatory spirit, which seems to have in-
“fluenced all our Measures and Operations. The unhappy con-
“sequences of this affair are that all our Vessels on the lake
“Ontario are fallen into the Enemy's hands, and that Loudor is
“reduced to act only on the defensive, and may find it hard
“enough to prevent the French from making any further Pro-
“gress.”

“London, Nov. 4th.—Letters from Boston of 20th September
“advise that some Persons had been at Oswego, and had taken a

“view of it, and report that the Fort was entirely demolished :
 “that only three graves could be discovered, *one of them with some*
 “*marks of distinction upon it, supposed to be the brave Col. Mercer's ;*
 “but that no dead Bodies were found above ground, or any signs
 “of a Massacre as reported.” * * * “By other
 “letters from Boston of 27th September there is a Confirmation
 “of the loss of Oswego, with this Variation from the account in
 “the first page in this Paper, that the Enemy spared the Carpen-
 “ters, Caulkers, and other Artificers they found in the place and
 “have carried their prisoners to Quebeck, where they may be
 “serviceable to them ; and Massacred all the rest of our men there
 “(as already related) amounting to upwards of Six Hundred.

“Thus we have lost one of the most important Garrisons upon
 “that Continent. Oswego enabled us to command the Lakes ;
 “it secured to us a share in the Furr Trade ; it cut off the com-
 “munication between Canada and Louisiana and thus prevented
 “our being restricted to Scanty Limits along the Sea-Shore ; it
 “embarrass'd the French in their Access to the Ohio ; It ob-
 “structed their Incursions into the Southern Colonies ; it covered
 “the Western Frontier of the Province of New York, and
 “secured the Friendship or rather the Neutrality of the Six
 “Nations. How it came to be lost we leave others to determine.”

“London, Nov. 9th.—As to the Particulars and Manner of the
 “Surrender of Oswego, we find that the Accounts given of it
 “hitherto are look'd upon in America to be imperfect, and not to
 “be depended upon ; but we are assured that the loss of it was
 “owing to the following Circumstances.

“Sixteen days after Major-General Abercromby's Arrival at
 “Troy and taking the Chief Command upon him, Lieutenant-
 “Colonel Bradstreet returned, according to Orders given him by
 “Major-General Shirley, before the expiration of his Command,
 “with the Battoes and about 18 or 1900 Battoemen from Oswego
 “to Shenectada that he might be ready to convey the Remainder
 “of the Cannon wanted for the Vessels at Oswego, and transport
 “thither such Provisions and Troops as it should be thought
 “proper to send ; and brought intelligence that the French had
 “formed a large camp within 35 miles of Oswego and designed
 “soon to attack it. In a Day or two after this it was determined

“ that His Majesty’s Forty-Fourth Regiment, consisting of about
 “ 850 men, which were then posted at Shenectada should proceed
 “ to Oswego, to reinforce the Garrison there ; but their Embarka-
 “ tion was unfortunately delayed, and the Battoes detained for
 “ about a Month ; by which means Oswego lost not only the
 “ Assistance of the Forty-Fourth Regiment, when the Enemy
 “ attack’d it, but also the benefit of the Vessels, and 200 Whale
 “ Boats, which had been built in the Spring and Summer for its
 “ Protection, and of the Battoemen which were raised for that as
 “ well as other services ; all which together with the Troops of
 “ the Garrison would, of themselves, have been sufficient for its
 “ Defence against the Enemy, without any other Reinforcement.
 “ *Here we have the Means whereby Oswego has been lost, but as*
 “ *no Account of it has yet appeared in the London Gazette, we may*
 “ *suspend our Belief in the Point.*”

“ Paris, Oct. 29th.—A ship arrived at Brest from Quebec has
 “ brought the important news of the taking of Choueguen, called
 “ by the English Fort Oswego, on the 14th August last. The
 “ Articles of Capitulation were that the Garrison should surrender
 “ Prisoners of War and that the French Troops should imme-
 “ diately take Possession of the Forts * * * * *
 “ There were at Oswego Seven Ships of War, one of 18 Carriage
 “ Guns, one of 14, one of 10, and three mounted with Patteraroes,
 “ besides 200 Boats of different sizes, and the Officers and Crews
 “ of these Vessels are included in the Capitulation. The Enemy
 “ had 152 Killed and Wounded, and Col. Mercer, Commandant
 “ of the Fort, is among the former * * * * *
 “ The Prisoners we have taken amount to 1600 men including
 “ 80 Officers.* These Prisoners consist of the Regiments of
 “ Shirley and Pepperell, Regular Troops, and part of Schuyler’s
 “ Regiment of Militia. The Five Colours belonging to these
 “ Regiments were deposited in the Churches of Quebec, Montreal,
 “ and the Three Rivers. We found in the Forts 121 Pieces of
 “ Artillery, of which 55 were Cannon of different sizes, 14 Mortars,
 “ and the rest Patteraroes and Haubiters, besides 1800 Muskets,

* This includes the Officers and Crews of the Shipping on the Lake.

“and a considerable quantity of Arms and Ammunition of all kinds. Since this advantage the English Colonies are more than ever exposed to the Incursions of our Indians who carry Desolation wherever they go. We are going to remove the seat of our Operations into Acadia where the Marquis de Montcalm is going with his army.”

We here come upon a paragraph announcing Shirley's arrival at home: “On Monday night (8th Nov.) Governor Shirley arrived at his lodgings in St. James's Street from America, but last from Plymouth.” And in connection with this we may extract another paragraph from a London Paper of earlier date:— “October, 14th; Letters from North America advise that General S—y [*sic.*] has been put under arrest and that we may soon expect him in England, where 'tis supposed he may be tried by a Court Martial, if not by some other Court; for it is hinted in those letters that there has been a great embezzlement of the Money sent over to America, though they don't presume to charge any particular Person with it.”

I merely call attention here to these notices of General Shirley, and may have something to say of that gentleman hereafter, as indeed a good deal has been said already. I proceed with the extracts, of which the next two record the arrival of the Oswego Garrison for exchange as Prisoners of War.

“Plymouth, Nov. 7th.—Yesterday arrived from Quebec in Canada, La Renommée, a French Packet Boat, Capt. Dennis Vitrée, Commander. She sailed under a Flag of Truce, and brought several Officers and about 300 Soldiers of His Majesty's 50th and 51st Regiments of Foot, who surrendered themselves Prisoners of War at Oswego on Saturday the 14th of August, when General Montcalm, with upwards of 3000 French Regulars, Canadians and Indians, took that Place.”

“London, Nov. 18th.—We hear that the French Ship which arrived some days ago at Plymouth with 384 English Prisoners, being part of the Garrison of Oswego, has made a Demand of the same Number of French Prisoners, and waits for an Answer before she will depart. This may be taken for the first formal overture for a Cartel.”

How the exchange was effected I can find no trace, but the

Officers were not long after in London, so I presume the negotiations to have been satisfactorily and speedily settled.

The next paragraph I come to is one from a Parisian source, and to be received with a large grain of salt.

“ A letter from Paris, Nov. 2nd, gives M. de Vandreuil's address to the Indians of the 5 Nations whom he had invited to see the fall of Oswego. It adds—The Indians of all the Upper Part of the Country seem to rejoice at our taking Oswego, though this was the Place where they were supplied with Brandy and several other things much cheaper than they have them from us.”

The two following letters from America take a view favorable to Shirley, and it is therefore but fair to give them :

“ Letter from Philadelphia, Sept. 23rd.—Last Winter General Shirley concerted a Plan for an Early Operation on Lake Ontario, and, as every one knows, was intent on freeing the Enterprize from all Obstructions ; the Design was to Embark a large Body of Men in 2 or 300 Whale Boats, which had been built for that Purpose, and under the Guard of the Arm'd Ships built there to attack Fort Frontenac or Niagara, and he had amass'd at a great Expence of Carriage, &c., a large Magazine of Provisions and all kinds of Necessaries. All recruiting Parties were ordered to join their Regiments by the 25th of March, when Orders came from England to attempt nothing till Lord Loudoun should arrive, but to have every thing ready for that Time. This was promised to be early but did not appear till the latter End of July. The Regulars lay idle at Albany till he reached that Place ; neither General Abercrombie nor Webb who arrived before him thought themselves at Liberty to act. This hath given Monsieur Montcalm, with above 3000 Regular Troops, Time to arrive in Canada from France and take the Field before us. Above 1000 Inhabitants of the Western Parts of this Province have been massacred in Cold Blood within this short time by the Ohio Morians, and nothing attempted against them till the late Affair of Col. Armstrong at Kittanning. This Enterprize shows that Proper Conductors would soon root the French and Indians out of these Parts.”

“ Extract of a Private Letter from New York.—The Loss of this

"important Fort (Oswego) is the Greatest that North America
 "ever felt ; it has cast a gloom upon the whole Continent, and
 "with great Reason ; it gives the Enemy all the Advantage they
 "could wish for ; they may now make just what Ravages they
 "please upon our Frontiers, with little or no Risque to them-
 "selves ; that was our Grand Barrier, and that above all Places
 "should have been secured, and all this is owing to the unlucky
 "Changes in our Military Commanders. General Shirley knew
 "the consequence of that Fort, and all along has had his Eye
 "upon that Pass to secure it from any Attempts the Enemy could
 "make against it, and had two Regiments, the 44th and 48th,
 "ready to send to strengthen it, when General Abercrombie
 "arrived and took the command from him. His advice to Mr.
 "Abercrombie was by all Means to secure and make that Place
 "defenceable against any Attempts ; but he thought it not proper
 "to take his Advice, but kept the 44th and 48th, Part of the
 "Highland, and Part of Otway's Regiment, which arrived with
 "him in June, at Albany, till Lord Loudon arrived in August,
 "which was a fatal Delay in his Lordship, too late to carry any
 "Schemes in Execution. I would not be understood to reflect
 "in the least on the Conduct of his Lordship, or Mr. Aber-
 "crombie ; but it cannot be expected that they can Acquire a
 "Proper Idea of this Country at once. Mr. Shirley has made it
 "his Study for many years, and without Doubt has a better
 "Knowledge than these Gentle. en can be expected to Acquire
 "for some years. [Here come some unimportant records on the
 "state of parties and local politics, with some commendation of
 "Shirley and abuse of his opponents]. Our Provincial Army are
 "doing Nothing, nor do I expect they will take Crown Point this
 "year ; and if they do, twenty such Conquests will not Cancel
 "the Loss of Oswego."

We now come to a singular notification which shows how hard
 pressed the French were in America at that time, as, indeed, final
 events sufficiently proved, and what great importance they had all
 along attached to the possession of the stupidly neglected fortress
 of Oswego ; there is a touch of the ludicrous in the anticipated
 guardianship of the Oswego garrison, should they not be speedily
 exchanged as Prisoners of War, and taken off the hands of their
 somewhat perplexed captiors.

“The Reason assigned for the French having sent home the Garrison of Oswego so soon, is that M. de Moncalm, Dieskau’s Successor, had determin’d to draw out the Regular Forces at Montreal and at Canada, amounting to about 8000 men, together with all the Militia, and in short all who were capable of bearing Arms, old or young, in order to crush Lord Loudon before his People should have recovered from their Consternation occasioned by the Loss of Oswego. So that had the English Prisoners remain’d in America, they must have been guarded by Women.”

The consternation felt in the Country itself may be further gathered from this :

“The following Passages are copied from a letter dated October 15, 1756, wrote by a Gentleman of Reputation at Providence. After a Short Account of the dishonourable Surrender of Oswego, by which two Forts, several small Vessels of War, near 100 Cannon (16 or 20 of them Brass) a great deal of Military Stores, &c. fell into the hands of the Enemy, this Correspondent subjoins the following Effects as consequential to that loss. ‘The Enemy has nothing to fear that way, and are coming upon us with all their force, so that I expect, before I can send you this, to hear of a Battle between 10 or 13,000 French, mostly Regulars, and about 8000 of us, the better half New England Men (who have been very sickly all Summer), the rest Regulars from England.’ [The Correspondent then details the Consequences of defeat and adds,] ‘We are arming our Militia to withstand them (if needful) in the best Manner we can ; but if we should have bad Fortune, we fear our Men will lose their Spirits ; and we cannot have a Supply from England before the Spring, if they intend at home to save us.’”

And I now give the last extract bearing on the subject which I can discover in the Public Prints to which I have access : “Advices from London, 16 December, says: The officers and Matrosses belonging to the Train of Artillery taken at Oswego, are arriv’d and join’d their Corps.”

The melancholy news of Colonel Mercer’s fall and the consequent loss of the important post entrusted to him, were long in reaching his family in Scotland ; it has been shewn that the latter

event at least was known in London on 30th September and on 4th November, the metropolitan papers referred to Col. Mercer's grave, as discovered and honourably marked by the conquerors ; but it is not till 13th November that the actual fact is communicated to his brother William by his friend Grahame, in a letter of that date from London : " I have just seen a letter from David Haldane " of Aberruthven who was Lieut. and Adjutant in Sir Will. " Pepperell's Regt. He is arrived at Plymouth with part of the " Garrison of Oswego ; what chiefly concerns us is that sometime " before the Surrender of that Place he lost his good friend Coll. " Mercer by a Cannon shot from the Enemy, and that he had seen " the last honors done him. For further particulars I await " his arrival in town—meantime you must believe I sincerely " condole our loss—can add no more."

Doubtless Grahame hesitated to convey the bad tidings, especially as on the 7th Sept., he had assumed his friend to be alive and well :

" For the first bearer of unwelcome news
" Hath but a losing office."

Haldane mentioned in the letter had received his appointment from Colonel Mercer, and shewed much sympathy with his family on the occasion.

Another intimate friend, Major Robertson, whose regiment I cannot accurately trace, writes to Grahame from Albany, 30th September. " We have lost our worthy friend, and England has thereby lost " Oswego. As in the former part of his life he had well discharged " the duties of a Son, a brother, and a friend, so on his last day he " was discharging the duty of a good and brave officer. Animated " by his example the Garrison that had confidence in him were " making a gallant defence, but whenever poor Mercer was killed " at the head of his people, their hearts sunk with him and the " place was immediately surrendered. * * * Monsieur " Montcalm, the French General, Commanded them, and it is said " is now marching with that force to join those at Crown Point " * * * to fall upon our new forts William and Edward. Lord " Loudoun has sent or is sending an whole force to support " and cover these places—even our raw Regt. marches. In an " hour I set out ; how happy shall I be if I can assist *in revenging*

“Mercer and my Country. My highest wish is if I am to fall that I may do so with a reputation like his.”

Colin Drummond, of Megginch, in November, writes William Mercer a letter of condolence : “Such a brother few have to lose, —and more,—the best and kindest of friends ; never man could die more regretted than he must by all who had the happiness of his acquaintance.” And again : “I had a letter last post from Joseph Austin from Plymouth, who writes me some of the particulars that happened, and much to your brother’s honour, tho’ very little to Mr. Shirley’s, who had it in his power to have supported the place—at least it looks so to us—* * * he died in defence of his Country and with great honour to himself.”

The Austin mentioned was apparently a Captain in the Navy, and his letter is a confirmation so far of the rumours already given : “the fort” he says, “was but a bauble of a thing not tenable, and defended by a half-starved garrison of Pepperell’s and Shirley’s.” He reproduces the stories of Indian cruelties and French indifference, and adds on the testimony of two of his brother officers, that General Shirley would “pass his time very poorly when things came out.”

I have said that the same ball that killed the Colonel first carried off a drummer by his side ; my authority for this is Grahame’s letter of 26th November : “your Brother’s fate was occasioned by a Cannon Ball that carried off his Bowels after it had killed a Drummer that was near him ; by a verbal will in presence of some officers he has left all his Cloaths to his servant.” This servant, James Robertson, had already been mentioned as faithful and attentive in Col. Mercer’s letters : he wrote to Mr. William Mercer shortly after his arrival at Totness, in November.

But the tributes to Mercer’s memory abound in the papers before me, and it is unnecessary to quote more, except perhaps one from his relative, Martin Lindsay, who, writing from Edinburgh, 16th November, says : “the death of so Worthy a man is a Publick Loss to mankind.”

I must now touch on General Shirley, and the part he played ; what this really was we have to a great extent already seen, but it

would appear that after his arrival in England he found himself, in spite of his influence, looked upon with some suspicion, and in his attempt at self-defence did not hesitate to cast insinuations on Colonel Mercer's ability.

Grahame writes 14th February, 1756, to William Mercer. "Not to dissemble with you, great outcry is made here [London] without foundation against his [Col. M.'s] sudden rise in the Army, merely from Envy and his wanting Somebody to back his pretensions. All I can do is to knock down false assertions by Pawning all the Credit I have to the truth; and I have the vanity to think that whatever I advance in that way is not disbelieved."

This, it will be seen, was before the Oswego affair, but after that, 15th January, 1757, Grahame writes: "Cruel dirt is being thrown on the Colonel's memory by Some to skrean themselves now he is no more, and believed by the Duke that he was no officer but a brave man. I who knew him well could never bear to hear that; which made me at pains to get information wherever I could, and I find he could not make Bricks without Straw; but no more at present, as I shall if possible clear his Character to the World Authentically, fearing no high Influence, and having no Connections to determine."

And again on 26th of the following month: "I am upon the clearing of his Character aspersed by some body to the Duke, and have taken measures that I think will be effectual, and in a public way before the House of Commons. I have given Mr. Hume Campbell my knowledge of the matter, and pointed out where he may Call for the vouchers for what I have advanced as facts. I wait the issue to give you Satisfaction in an affair that concerns me as a friend as much as it does you a Brother."

Grahame's vindication of his friend was completely successful, if we may judge from his words, 9th April, 1757: "They propose to turn the tables upon Shirley, and order a Court Martiall upon his conduct; whether that now will take place I know not, as there is a total change in the Ministry tho' not yet settled; however I had a copy of my memorandum conveyed to the Duke of Cumberland, so all fault-finding with your Brother's conduct has ceased."

This finished satisfactorily the controversy whatever it was, for I can find no particulars of the form it took or the length it went ; nor do I gain any further information about General Shirley, save that he was made Lieutenant-General in 1759. Shortly after his return from America, report said that the Ministry (see Grahame's letter 16th March, 1756) was desirous of quieting him by the Government of Jamaica, but to this appointment I presume the subsequent enquiry put a stop. And here it may be noted as curious that some years before (letter of 16th April, 1751) Colonel Mercer had the conditional offer of this very Government, but Governor Trelawney, whose retirement was looked for, did not resign till the following year ; and in the mean time the course of circumstances had tied Col. M. to the line of his immediate profession.

It is useless to wade through a tedious correspondence on the subject of the arrears of pay and the settlement of Col. Mercer's accounts with the War Office. Suffice it to say that his family received but little of what he left ; he had of necessity made himself responsible at Oswego for considerable sums, and for these after death he was refused credit.

Such then is the true history of the fall of Oswego, an event now probably known to few, but at the time causing, as we have seen, the greatest interest and even alarm both in America and England. But it was not without its good results, for it roused the authorities at home ; it increased their exertions, not only on the Trans-Atlantic Continent, but in Europe, and even in the far East, where we were maintaining a hard and bitter struggle with the French for the possession of what was in after years to be the magnificent Empire of India.

Although war was not actually declared with France till 18th May, 1756, the contest in North America had for nearly a year been carried on. Indeed the Oswego Garrison at the time of their capitulation were ignorant of the Proclamation of War, and Col. Mercer's letter of 8th July, 1756, already quoted, shows how completely he and his unfortunate band were cut off from communication with the outer world. In the royal Proclamation the grounds of hostilities are declared to be the encroachments of the French on the Ohio and in Nova Scotia ; the non-evacuation

of four neutral Islands in the West Indies (in conformity with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle) and the invasion of Minorca. Thus the chief cause of this resort to the "ultima ratio regum" sprung in America, and that the war there was inadequately conducted was possibly the result of the enormous business of a like kind then employing the attention of the British Government.

But it is plain that their appointments to the important offices in America were not judicious. Shirley, whose career we have seen, was the only one with any knowledge of the country, or experience of the people; Abercromby appears a modern Fabius; and Lord Loudon, perhaps the best of the high commanders, failed to give satisfaction. He had been appointed Commander-in-Chief 20th March, 1756, and reached New York on 23rd July, but having on 3rd January, 1757, laid an embargo on all outward bound ships for the purpose of concealing his plans as to the contemplated Siege of Louisburg, and having afterwards been accused of wasting the time of the army at Halifax, a clamor was raised against him at home, and in the following December he was recalled. It were unprofitable to go through the varying fortunes of the contest during the two following years, but the Victory was ultimately won and Canada secured by Wolfe's triumph in September, 1759, over Mercer's old antagonist, General de Montcalm. The story is too well known to be repeated. Quebec was taken. Montcalm, whose gallantry was conspicuous, fell, as did the young English leader, of whom King George II. said, "if he were mad, he wished he would bite some more of his Generals!"

Of this long conflict a modern writer says, "though frivolous in origin and disastrous in its early progress, it terminated triumphantly," and he confirms what I have just expressed, that "it was only in this contest that England discovered her strength." (Wade's Chronological History, p. 387).

As to the frivolity of the origin of the war there is some justification for the imputation, as the Proclamation shows it required the recitation of minor causes of offence to make a substantial grievance; the triumphant termination none deny, and I presume the disaster alluded to in the early progress to be the loss of the fortress, the narrative of which has here been traced.

A word in conclusion: a consideration of the authorities above

collected will show the disaster of Oswego to have been anything but disgraceful to those engaged in its defence; moreover, by putting the Home Government on their mettle, it led to useful and even splendid results. All testimony leads to these points; and if no tribute was paid by the National Government to a brave man, who, acting on the defensive, far away from support, yet conducted his operations with courage and energy, while life remained to him, it is satisfactory that the officers and men of his overtaken and inadequate force thoroughly respected his memory—of which a curious instance might be adduced, did it not come within the *arcana* of family history—while his victorious opponents showed him what hurried honor they might, by rudely decorating the soldier's grave.

It was not the fashion of the time to take complimentary notice of men dead, and so no longer valuable, and the less so when in life they had no backstairs influence to boast. But we improve—with logical brilliance we discover that a Crimean sepulchre differs, not geographically only, from one on the shore of Lake Ontario. However, Shirley lived to avoid a Court Martial and gain higher military rank; Mercer passed away in silence, and his surviving brother had difficulty in recovering the long arrears of pay due to him, and then, if a tedious search has arrived at an accurate conclusion, but a miserable balance was eventually handed over; for deductions were made for contracts entered into by Colonel Mercer on his own personal responsibility, without which negotiations would have fallen to the ground—contracts made because his official superiors had left him no alternative—contracts undertaken in a critical emergency, and for the sole furtherance of the public service. His landed estate of Pitteuchar in Scotland was nearly all that his brother William succeeded to, and this was not within the reach of the British Treasury of that day.

Are we purer in the conduct of our Public Departments now? Are we less partial, and more honourable? In the persistently misquoted line of old Matthæus Borbonius, we are told that times change and we in them—I doubt it. Human nature varies little, no matter what the age or where the climate.

But enough; let so much, in the phrase of the old Halicarnassian, let so much then have been said concerning the fort of Oswego and its fall.

BARHAM AND BEECROFT, PRINTERS, READING.

